



Liberty University streamlines recruitment and strengthens branding with in-house print shop

Recruiting undergraduate and graduate students has become a highly sophisticated marketing activity for American colleges and universities. At Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, up to 75 percent of print has been brought in-house since January 2015. As a result, response times and print costs have been significantly reduced while the opportunity for creative use of print media has increased.



Industry sector: General Commercial Printing

Business name: Liberty University

Headquarters: Lynchburg, Virginia, USA

Interviewees: Bob Boyer, Senior Director of Fulfillment, Postal Services, Print Shop, and Warehousing; Danny Horsley, Print Shop Manager

HP equipment: HP Indigo 7800 Digital Press, HP Scitex FB500 Printer

Website: Liberty.edu



Challenge

“Before coming to Liberty, I worked with one-to-one marketing and saw the power of personalized direct mail. I believed that the university could make use of digital printing technology to improve its communications and be able to react to opportunities in a more timely way.”

Danny Horsley, Print Shop Manager, Liberty University



Improving the effectiveness of print

Liberty University, founded in 1971, is the largest nonprofit university in the United States. Its 14,500 resident students come from all 50 states, and it has an online enrollment of more than 110,000 students.

“We began investigating the feasibility of creating an in-house print shop two years ago,” explains Bob Boyer, Senior Director of Fulfillment, Postal Services, Print Shop, and Warehousing. “At the same time, we began investigating the different digital presses on the market to ensure that we chose the right solution for Liberty.”

The university generates an enormous amount of print. It prints a 280,000-piece mailer each month, as well as recruitment materials, event invitations and programs, schedules and calendars, print related to sports events, and high volume mailings to alumni.

“In addition to purchasing commercial and academic work, we were also buying large-format print with very high mark-ups,” says Boyer. “We decided to look at doing our own large-format printing while we were at it.”

Liberty started recruiting its print shop team, and Danny Horsley was appointed print shop manager.

“We undertook side-by-side comparisons of print as we considered the digital press vendors,” Horsley explains. “Apart from print quality, we looked at ease of operation and maintenance, training and support, and compatible finishing solutions. Accurate and consistent reproduction of the specific red and blue of the university’s colors was also an important factor.”

Solution

“After reviewing all the information we’d gathered and studying the print samples, we chose the HP Indigo 7800 Digital Press and the HP Scitex FB500 Printer. These offered the productivity, versatility, and print quality that we were looking for.”

Bob Boyer, Senior Director of Fulfillment, Postal Services, Print Shop, and Warehousing. Liberty University



Choosing the versatile options

“The installation and ramp-up of the presses went smoothly,” said Horsley. “We also have a full range of finishing equipment, giving us folding, stitching, perfect binding, and die-cutting capabilities. Nine people now work in the print shop, and three of us have been trained to operate the HP Indigo 7800 Digital Press.

“Being able to print on a wide variety of substrates up to 18pt/148 lbs (400g/m²) thick at speeds up to 120 pages per minute enables us to take on projects for a very broad range of applications,” he continues. “We use the special color capability for our red and blue branding so every piece is right every time.” Variable-data printing has enabled Liberty to do more targeted direct mail.

Recruitment and fundraising letters that had previously been outsourced are now printed in-house. Boyer estimates that up to 75 percent of Liberty University’s printing needs are fulfilled by the print shop. In September 2015, the HP Indigo digital press produced 1.6 million impressions.

The HP Scitex FB500 Printer is a hybrid printer that can print rigid and flexible substrates. “We print graphics, signage, and pop-ups for our recruiters to take on the road with them,” says Horsley. “We do campus decorations, like pole banners, and also directional and informational signage.” In addition, banners can be printed overnight to celebrate an important sports victory.

“This sort of thing, with colorful imaging and branding, adds a lot to life at Liberty University,” Boyer says.

Result

“Since we only have one customer, our Marketing department, our objective isn’t to make money, but to save money. On large-format print, we can regularly deliver cost savings of up to 30 percent over outsourcing.”

Bob Boyer, Senior Director of Fulfillment, Postal Services, Print Shop, and Warehousing. Liberty University



Responding to challenges

Twice a year, Liberty invites high school students to experience college life for a weekend. “They get a full experience – staying in a dorm, eating in the dining hall, and attending classes,” explains Boyer. “Recently, there were 4,000 students registered for the weekend, but 5,000 showed up. It was a Friday night, and we were on the way home. We turned around, opened the print shop, and went to work.

“With four pieces to print – including identification credentials, itineraries, campus maps and schedules – time was the greatest pressure. The thought of a thousand high school students wandering around campus not knowing where to go was something the Marketing department didn’t want to contemplate.

“The itineraries were 12 pages plus cover booklets about CD size, 5 by 4.5 inches,” says Horsley. “The campus maps were 11 by 17 inches, folded to 8.5 by 5.5 inches, and the schedules were 8 pages, self-covered.”

Without the need for platemaking or make-ready, the jobs were called up and printing began at 6 p.m. “We have a very experienced team who knew just what to do,” says Boyer. “We were able to complete the job in three hours and deliver it to the evening welcome event by 9.30 p.m. This was not a job that could have been outsourced, and it further justified the decision to have an in-house print shop and our own digital press.

“Working with HP has been great,” Boyer concludes. “They’ve been willing to help in any way and have supported us 100 percent.”